
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier

B.C. JOINS WESTERN REGIONAL CLIMATE ACTION INITIATIVE

VICTORIA – British Columbia has joined with five western U.S. states to partner in the new Western Regional Climate Action Initiative (WRCAI), Premier Gordon Campbell announced today.

The purpose of the WRCAI is to identify, evaluate and implement ways to collectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region and to achieve related co-benefits. The initiative requires partners to set an overall regional goal to reduce emissions, develop a market-based, multi-sector mechanism to help achieve that goal, and participate in a cross-border greenhouse gas (GHG) registry.

“I welcome B.C.’s entry into this important initiative, which will reduce greenhouse gases through a collaborative approach that will ultimately lead to further actions being taken by governments, industry and individuals,” said Campbell. “As we said in the throne speech, we are committed to creating a co-ordinated, integrated, market-based approach to meet our targets and we will work with our partners to develop a sensible, efficient system for registering, trading and purchasing carbon offsets and carbon credits.”

“With the addition of British Columbia, the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative is now an international partnership,” said New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. “I look forward to working with Premier Campbell, whose leadership has put British Columbia’s climate policies on par with the five progressive states that founded this initiative.”

“We are committed to working across political, geographic and national boundaries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and find solutions to the problem of climate change,” said Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano. “We are delighted to have British Columbia join with us, and we appreciate Premier Campbell’s leadership on this issue.”

“With Premier Campbell’s leadership, British Columbia’s entry into this Initiative will accelerate our momentum in dealing with the critical crisis of greenhouse emissions,” said Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski. “It is my hope today’s announcement will lead other American states and Canadian provinces to join us, in addition to underscoring the need for a continent-wide dialogue about confronting the challenges of climate change.”

“I have been honoured to work with Premier Campbell on several issues important to Washington and British Columbia, and I look forward to continuing our good working relationship as we join together to reduce greenhouse gases,” said Washington Governor Chris Gregoire. “By making this an international effort, we are truly on our way toward a real reduction in climate pollution.”

“We welcome British Columbia’s participation in the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative,” said California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. “We all share the same goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change while boosting economic growth. Premier Gordon Campbell’s leadership on this issue is helping our two countries take a collaborative approach that will result in real actions and innovative solutions that will have an impact across the globe.”

The governors of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington jointly signed the WRCAI agreement in February 2006. The agreement, which now also applies to B.C., includes but is not limited to:

- Setting an overall regional goal by August 2007 to reduce emissions from the province and the states collectively, consistent with state-by-state and provincial goals;
- Developing, within 18 months of the effective date of the agreement (August 2008), a design for a regional market-based multi-sector mechanism to achieve the regional GHG reduction goal; and
- Participating in a multi-state/provincial GHG registry to enable tracking, management, and crediting for entities that reduce GHG emissions, consistent with the state/provincial GHG reporting mechanisms and requirements.

The WRCAI is the first step in developing a regional carbon-trading mechanism that can help industry to meet GHG reduction targets at the lowest possible cost. B.C. is the first jurisdiction outside of the U.S. to be welcomed into the WRCAI, which requires aggressive greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and a commitment to adopt clean tailpipe standards for passenger vehicles.

In the 2007 throne speech, the Province:

- Set a target to reduce GHG emissions by 33 per cent below current levels by 2020, which will place emissions 10 per cent under 1990 levels;
- Announced it will set new tailpipe emissions standards for all new vehicles sold in B.C. to be phased in between 2009 and 2016; and
- Announced it will establish a Climate Action Team to identify practical options and actions for making the government of B.C. carbon neutral by 2010.

Campbell said creating a regional initiative will allow B.C. to participate in a larger carbon market and provide more opportunities for low-cost solutions, as well as fostering economic opportunities through the development of new technologies and innovation.

“Effectively dealing with climate change will require a different approach – an approach where we collaborate with our partners to develop a market-based mechanism that will help us achieve regional goals while realizing economic opportunities,” said Campbell. “We are grateful for the governors’ support in welcoming British Columbia into this initiative and their willingness to extend this initiative to other provinces. In the months and years ahead, we will do our best to show the benefits of this partnership across North America. The bigger the market, the more co-ordination we can achieve, the more progress we will make in combating global warming.”

A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding between the States and the Province, WRCAI's welcoming letter to British Columbia and Premier Campbell's agreement to the partnership are available at: www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca//DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=365

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